"Splatoon 3 Expansion Pass: Side Order" Development Sketches and Stories! The World of Order Unraveled from Three Perspectives.

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Additional editing and revisions by rassicas.
Translation notes will be in brackets [[like so.]]

Highlighted and **bold** text within the interviewees answers was done according to the formatting of the original article.

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Developer Profile:

Seita Inoue - Art direction, overall production and world setting.

Toshiyuki Sudo - Sound direction, Sound design, and managing background music

Kenji Matsumoto - General gameplay direction, mechanics, and structure.

[Character] The real stories behind the characters, untold in-game

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—— First of all, please tell us why Agent 8 (Eight) and Off the Hook were chosen as the main characters.

Inoue: We thought Eight would fit perfectly as an unadulterated protagonist that could be strengthened into

various forms with color chips. Since Off the Hook was barely touched on in the main story of Splatoon 3, we decided to tell the story of Eight and Off the Hook, which would also be connected to "Octo Expansion," the additional paid DLC of the previous title.

—— Eight's new white-based outfit was quite striking. What is the most significant element of this outfit?

Inoue: The most important part is that **it is actually based on diving gear.**

The metal fittings on the back, the unique shoes, and the tight-fitting suit are all inspired by diving gear, as Eight fights against fish enemies and “dives” into a cyber world and the Internet.

—— Speaking of Off the Hook, how did Pearl come to take the form of a drone?

Inoue: Pearl was chosen as a guide for the subjects of the Memverse, which Marina had created. She was chosen to be a drone because using a free-moving and agile form would be the easiest way to guide subjects.

—— Why is it that the Pearl Drone is in charge of guiding Eight through the story rather than Marina or Acht?

Inoue: Eight, Marina, and Acht are rather quiet, so Pearl seems to be the one who always takes the lead.

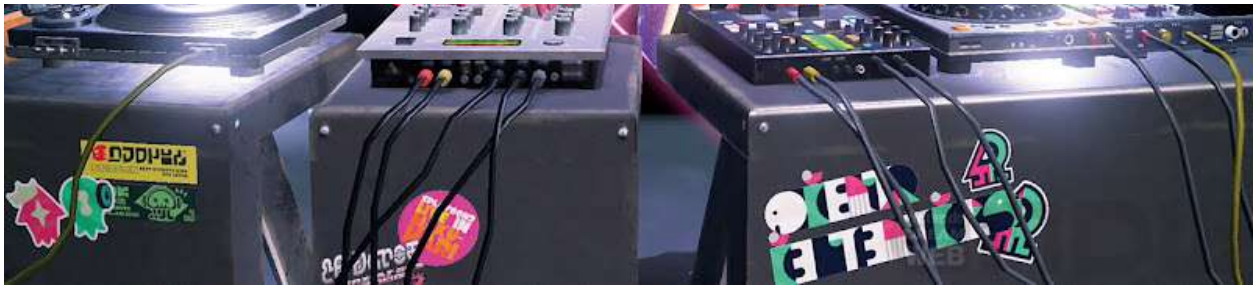
—— How did you come up with the exclusive "Pearl Plush" headgear?

Inoue: Many players were wearing the "Teddy Band", which you can get in Story Mode, with the school uniforms to make an outfit like you'd see at a theme park. I took a hint from that and made the Pearl Drone into a stuffed toy, based on the plush headbands that are common in theme parks.

[[TN: Real life example of the kind of headband mentioned. As for the school uniforms, there is a trend in Japan for groups of friends to wear matching school uniforms to theme parks, because it's cute. Not just high schoolers, but young adult women who have already graduated do it too. You can look up "制服ディズニー" to get a better sense of what Inoue is talking about.]]

—— There are many roles for Marina in "Side Order." What kind of character would you describe her as?

Inoue: In Splatoon 2, Marina played more of a support role when compared to Pearl, but after "Octo Expansion," she became a bit more willing to try different things. Although the roots of her character have not changed, I thought it would be good to give the impression that she is more spontaneous and open-minded than before.



As a DJ

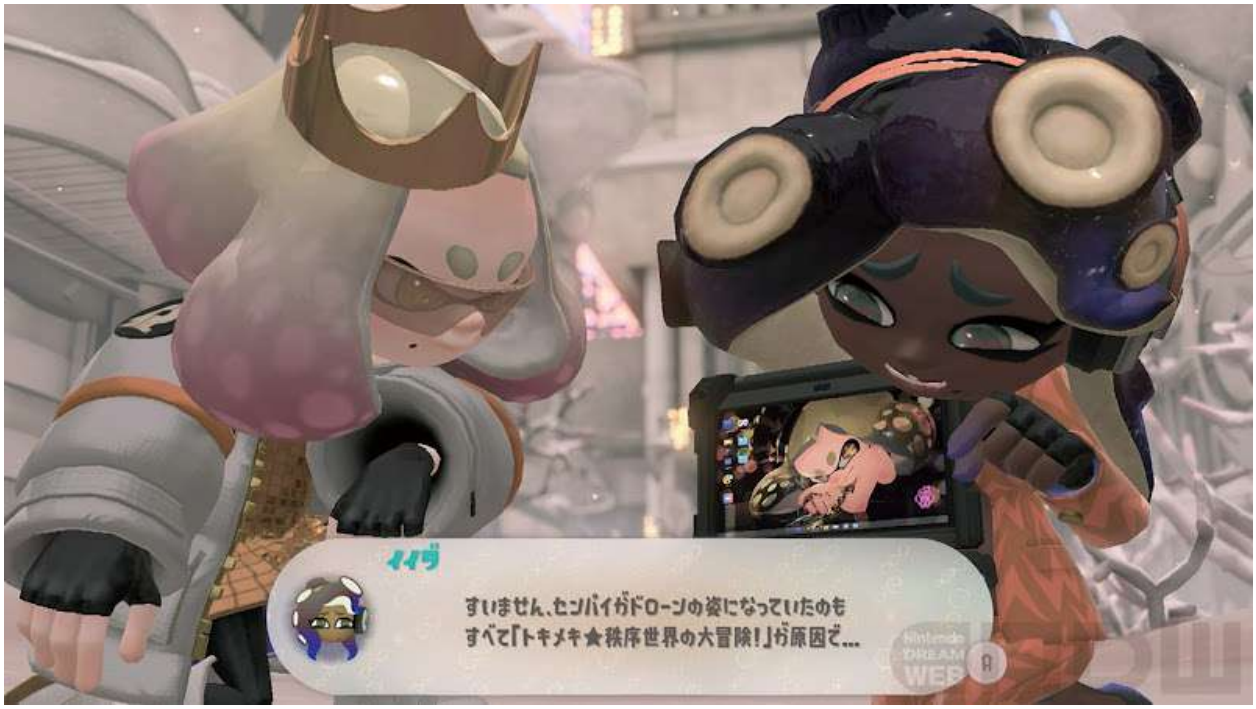
As a hacker

As a boss

—— By the way, does "Dramatic Days in Orderland" come from Marina's personal taste in names?

Inoue: Yes. It shows her love of manga.

[[TN: The Japanese name for “Dramatic Days in Orderland” is "Tokimeki ★ A Great Adventure in an Orderly World!" which reads like the title of a manga.]]



—— What is the most important aspect of Off the Hook’s new costumes?

Inoue: We wanted to represent the idea of "world-class artists," so we made Pearl's outfit a space suit **themed with the energy of "transcending the world."** For Marina, we went with a more formal look, **a two-piece suit that would look great on any stage.** Off the Hook knows how to look their best, so I wanted to give the impression that they can dress brilliantly even in outfits that would not normally suit any other characters.

—— Now that Off the Hook has finished their world tour, how do you see their future?

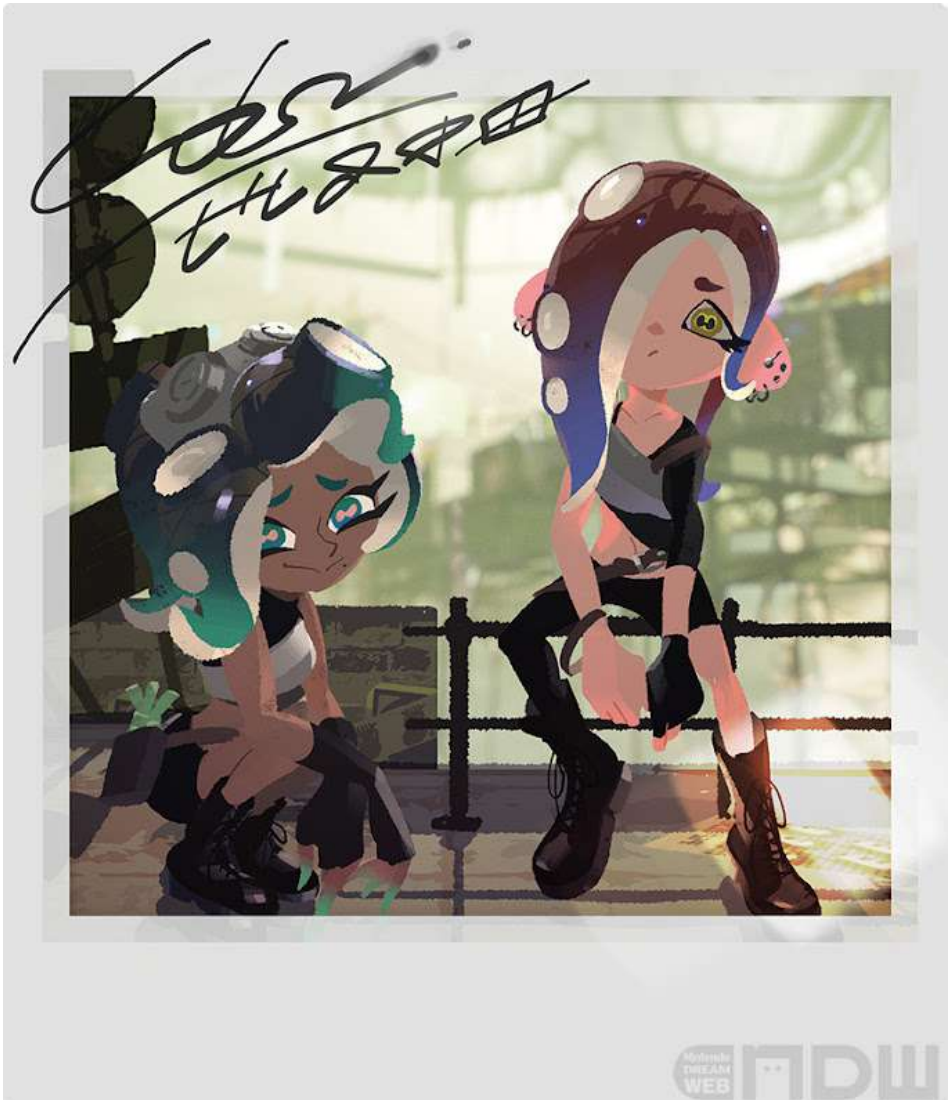
Sudo: It seems that Off the Hook is becoming more and more interested in going above and beyond in jam sessions with just the two of them, and they're wondering things like if they can do something big, and if they got the money and know how to do it.

—— Why did you decide to make Acht, a character established in Splatoon 2, appear in "Side Order"?

Inoue: As a guide to the virtual world, I thought of something like CQ Cumber from "Octo Expansion" or an artificial intelligence like in Alterna from Story Mode, but I thought those were a bit boring, so I decided to use Acht.

—— Why does Acht wear red goggles to hide their eyes?

Inoue: Their goggles come from the kind that octoling soldiers wear, but since their face looks too cute without them, they wear goggles to make themselves look cool.



—— In the game, it's mentioned that Acht was a delinquent. What did they do to gain such a bad reputation?

Inoue: When they were at training school, they often skipped lectures and training, and broke the dress code, causing the instructors to have a hard time with them. In Octarian society, where diligence is a virtue, people like Acht are heretics.

Although they may be called a delinquent, they weren't aggressive or anything like that, just apathetic. However, they were probably feared by those around them because of rumors about them that had no basis in reality.

You can see Acht slacking off in the back left.

—— Who exactly is Cipher and why is it collecting Prlz?

Inoue: The Prlz contain data about the World of Order and are used for hacking by Marina. **Cipher's goal is to learn the truth about the World of Order** (the virtual world), and is doing that by collecting Prlz.

Concept sketches of Cipher

——What is the significance of the silver rings worn by the inhabitants of the Order Sector?

Inoue: The inhabitants of the Order Sector are nodes of the program that make up the virtual world in the form of living beings. The metal rings they wear is a device for receiving inputs from external sources. By receiving inputs and carrying out their assigned tasks, they construct the world of order.

Concept sketches of the residents who inhabit the Order Sector

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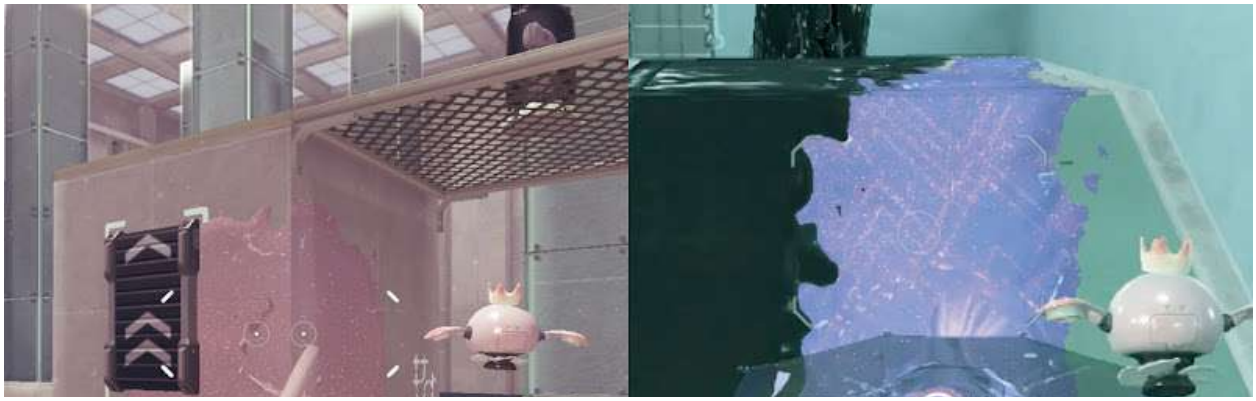
[Setting] A number of fascinating ways the colorless world of order was made beautiful.

—— Why did you choose to set the game in a virtual reality called the Memverse?

Inoue: We chose a world where it would be easy to express the point that the gameplay itself has a very different structure from previous entries, the theme of "order," and to show the active role Off the Hook plays. In the world of "Splatoon," virtual reality technology is developing every day, just like in real life. But with Marina's technical skills and intense focus, she's developing and pushing the technology even further. However, she's so absorbed in its development that she forgets about the impact that might have on the people around her...

—— Black and white ink appears in the world of order. Were there any unique graphical innovations due to the lack of saturation?

Inoue: This time, the player's ink color has a dull and subdued tone. **The colors and patterns of the ink change as chips are acquired**, which is a major difference from what we've seen before in Splatoon. We were conscious of maintaining a balance of vividness so that it does not blend in too much with the world of low saturation and black enemy ink, and yet doesn't stand out too much.



Left: Default state, Right: Enhanced state

—— What was your goal in making the Jelletons look so terrifying when compared to other enemies in the world of "Splatoon"?

Inoue: Octarians and salmonids are also scary-looking, but I think they look lively in their own way. Compared to them, we aimed to create a design that people instinctively know is an enemy. We were conscious of making them give off the feeling of "death", as opposed to that liveliness of previous enemies, along with the feeling that they're a different species that seems to be unable to communicate. We applied these concepts into the creation of the Jelleton's design.

—— Is there a design motif for every Jelleton?

Inoue: The Jelletons created by Order (the final boss) use aquatic creatures as motifs, and the parts are basically arranged according to the skeletons of the original creatures. For example, the Andante has eyes and fins based on a sea bream skeleton. However, the Lento has a large skull, which would not be present in the skeleton of an Asian sheepshead wrasse. It's a little different from what the creature actually looks like, as it was created by the imitations of Order, who was only born recently.

[[TN: Here is an image of the skeleton of an Asian sheepshead wrasse and here is how it normally looks.]]

—— Why were musical terms chosen for Jelleton's names?

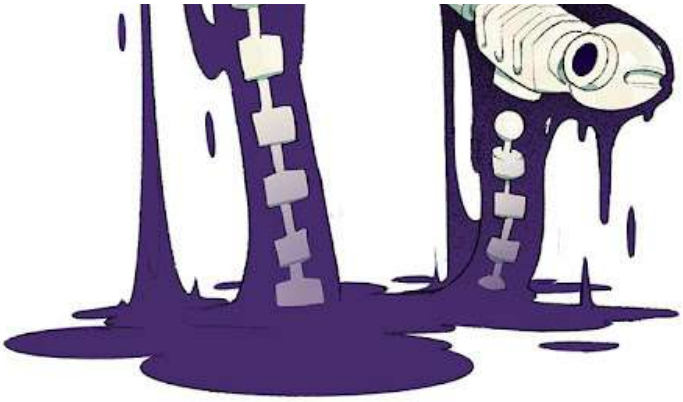
Inoue: Since this is a world developed by Marina, who is a composer, she used music-related terms for the project. As well as that, Jelleton [[Called *Sukerutōn* in JP]] is a play on "Skeleton," "Tone," and [[*sukeru*]] "Transparent." Overlorder [[*Ōdako*]] means "big octopus," which is what Order's true form is. I also like the fact that "Marina," "Acht," and "Order" end with a similar sound [[in Japanese]], like a surname.

[[TN: In Japanese, Jelletons are "Sukerutōn" (a transcription of the English word skeleton), which sounds both like "tone" (as in color) and "sukeru" (which means see-through).

Ōdako (Overlorder's name in Japanese) is a combination of "Ō," which is a prefix that means big, and "Dako," which means octopus. Ōda is a transcription of the English word "order" and is Order's name before its boss transformation.

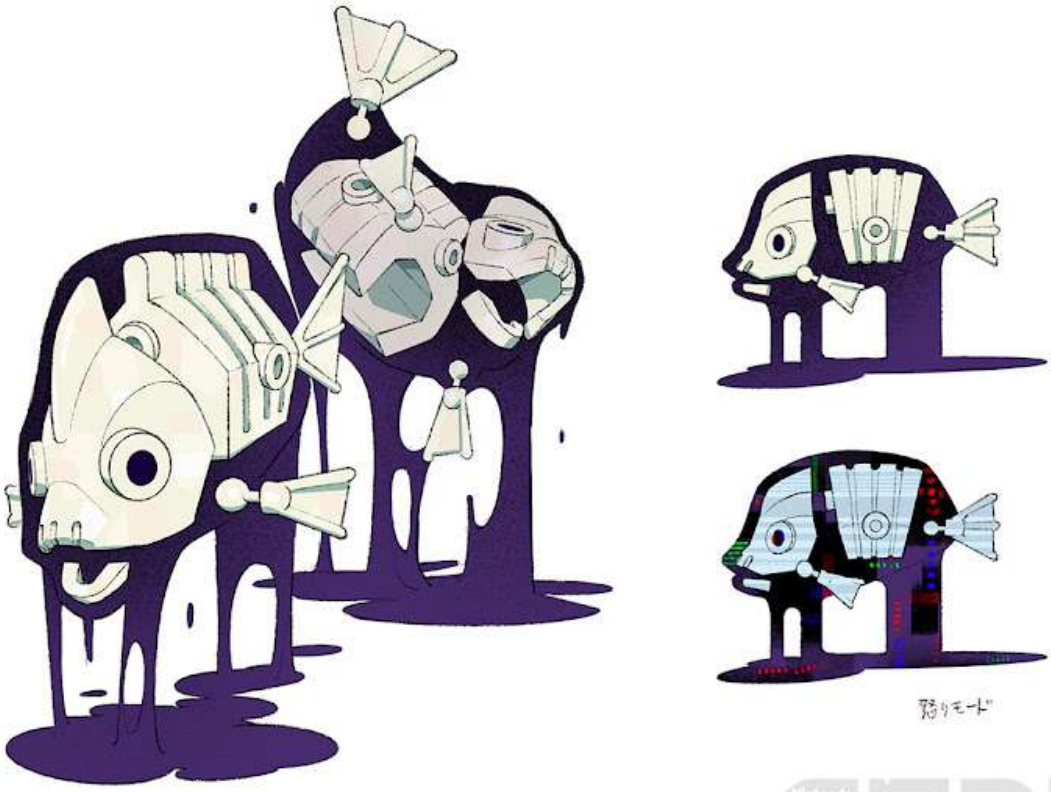
Marina, Acht, and Order are Iida (イイダ), Mizuta (ミズタ), and Ōda (オーダ), respectively. Their names end with similar sounds.]]

Development sketch of an Alla Mambo



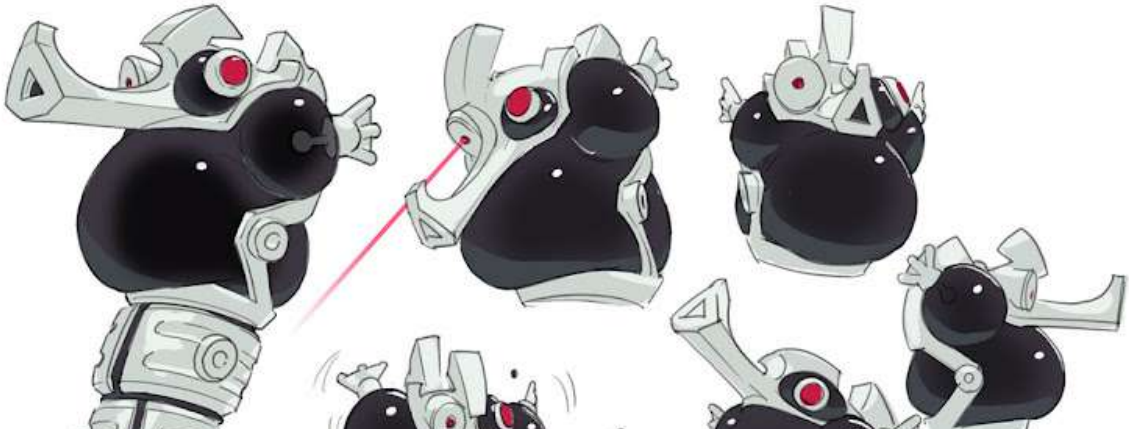
Development

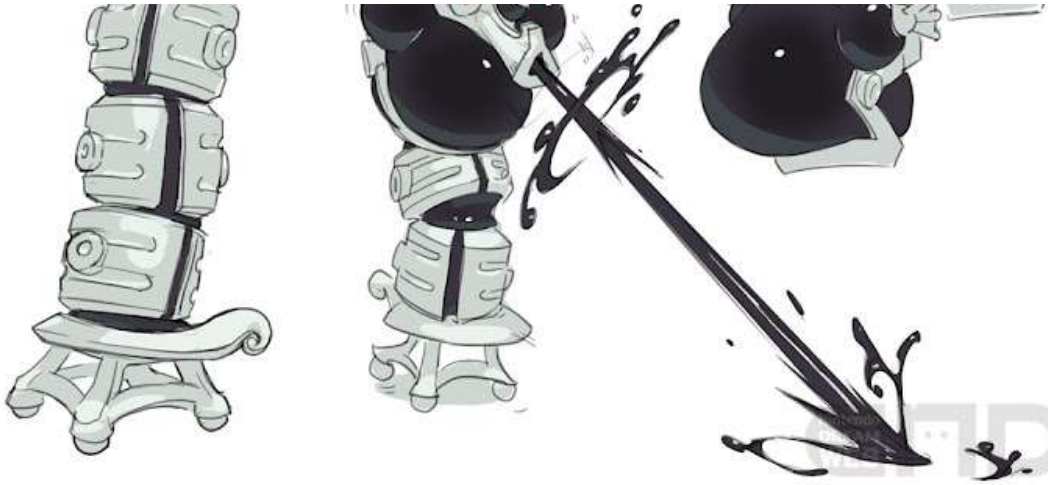
sketch of a Swarming Languendo



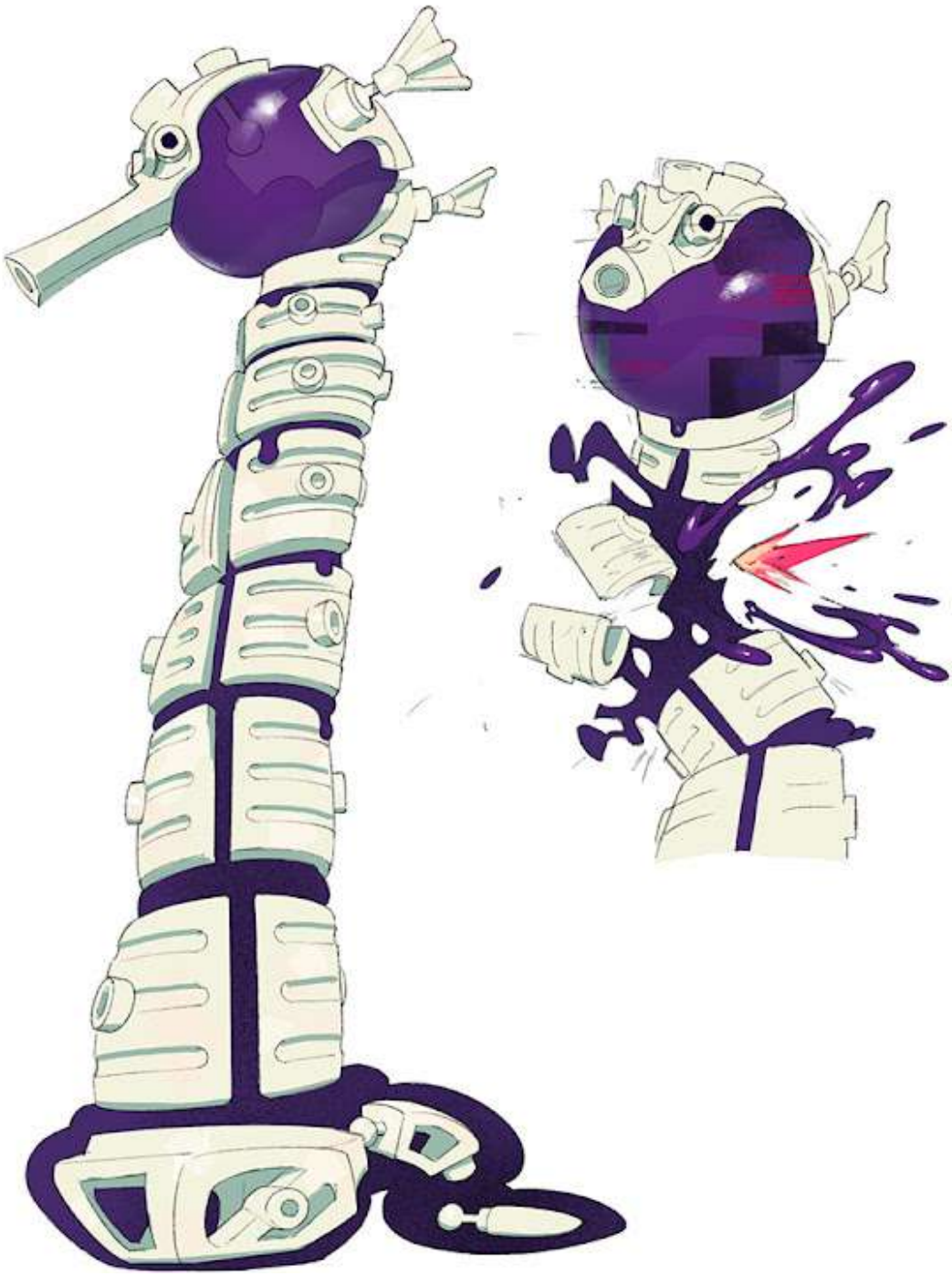
Development

sketch of a Marching Andante





Development sketch of a Towering Nobilmente #1



Development sketch of a Towering Nobilmente #2

On the sound of “Side Order."

—— There is a lot of BGM with a different atmosphere from the world's conventional music. What was the reasoning behind that?

Sudo: The background music in "Side Order" is generated from the memories of those sucked into the Memverse and played by the schools of fish (Free Association). Due to this, the music has an unconventional atmosphere, mixing the music and sounds people hear in their day-to-day lives with the emotions they feel when they listen to the music.

The background music of the Order Sector and the foyer incorporate elements of ambient music to set the tone of the world, and as one approaches the top floor of the spire, the background music on the floors is influenced by Order, and the sounds are cut, pasted, and arranged in a more violent manner to create a sense of having "too much order."

The Foyer

—— Did the adoption of musical terms in the Jelleton's names influence the music in "Side Order"?

Sudo: The use of musical elements shows the fact that Marina is the creator, but we weren't conscious of a direct relationship between the names and the music. It would be better to think of the names as using musical terms that match the characteristics of the enemies.

—— What was the idea behind the sounds that play when you press the buttons on the menu screen?

Sudo: Pressing the buttons has no in-game meaning, but we wanted to incorporate the fun of collecting sounds and hints for strategy.

For example, the sounds made by Jelletons are easier to recognize in order to conquer the Spire of Order if you know which Jelleton they are. The idea was to make it easier to climb the spire by listening to the Jelletons' sounds in advance with the Jelleton field guide.

—— How did you come up with the idea of playing a tune by touching the color chips you regain in the fight against the last boss?

Matsumoto: After we decided on a MIDI pad motif for the palette, we decided that we wanted the color chips to have not only a color but also a tone and to play a sound when selected in the menu.

When we were thinking about what kind of sound to make, I thought it would be satisfying to have the chips, which until now had simply sounded when collected, play a tune in the final battle, and I asked the sound staff to help us develop this. When I asked them, I thought “can we really do it?” and I worried it was an unreasonable request, but in the end, I think it came together nicely.

—— There is a poster in Splatoon 2 that seems to show the final boss. Was this intentional foreshadowing?

Inoue: We started working on Side Order after the release of Splatoon 3, and I wasn't planning anything

during the time of Splatoon 2, so it was just a coincidence. The "giant octopus" trope appears in many myths and disaster films, so I think it is very appealing as a final boss, and I am glad that we were able to depict it well.

A screenshot from Splatoon 2

Overlorder, the final boss

—— The goal of the final boss was “to create a world without color.” How does “having order” relate to “a colorless world”?

Inoue: Although the colorful "chaos” of Splatsville is fun, I think some would get tired of it after a while. Order is an entity made up of the desires of those kinds of people who wish for the opposite of color and chaos- a world of uniform, monochromatic order.

[Game System] What's the core of a game meant to be played repeatedly?

—— What was the concept behind the project's gameplay?

Matsumoto: Each game in the Splatoon series thus far has had a Story Mode, Splatoon 2 has additional content with Octo Expansion, and the Story mode in Splatoon 3 is a culmination of it all, so I thought it was a good time to propose a new system for a single-player game. Side Order was created so that players have something to play between battles or when offline and have a unique experience each time.

—— How did you come up with the "If you die, you lose everything and have to start over from the first floor" system?

Matsumoto: In order to create a system in which the player's performance can be progressively improved in a variety of ways in a short period of time, each time they play, it is necessary to reset the player's status, which is why we adopted the format. Instead of simply starting over, everything gained in a playthrough is converted into a currency called a Prlz.

—— Certain players have found the system "difficult." What considerations did you have in mind for such players?

Matsumoto: Using Marina's hacks can permanently raise a player's basic abilities, so the more you hack, the better you can ascend the spire.
You can unlock hacks with the Prlz I mentioned earlier, so I think that if you don't give up and keep trying and using hacks over and over again, you will do well. Prlz can be used to restore a previous playthrough

as well.

—— What did you consider in terms of “freedom of play”?

Matsumoto: In order to create a single-player experience that can be played repeatedly, we set up a variety of upgrades that allowed players to play in different ways with various types of weapons. As a result of this variety of enhancements available, you can freely enhance and play in your own way.

About the Order Weapons in Side Order

—— How did you choose which type of weapon appears in “Side Order” as Order Weapons?

Matsumoto: Some weapons were chosen as being representative of that weapon’s class, while others were chosen for having a look that suits the world of Side Order.

—— What advice would you give to beginners on which weapons are easiest to clear the spire with?

Matsumoto: I would say that it is easiest to clear the spire with a weapon that you are used to using. Each palette (weapon) has a set of common color chip tones, so I think it's easier to build a powerful arsenal if you choose those color chips.

For example, if you collect Lucky Chips for Pearl's Palette (Dualies), you will be able to enjoy collecting items.

—— Why did you choose a different set-up and difficulty level for the last weapon, “Eight's Palette,” than the other characters?

Matsumoto: The palette is designed to test what you have built up in your play so far, either through Marina's hacks or your own skills. It was decided that if I wanted to challenge myself, I would use the “Eight” palette. In terms of the story, we positioned it as an opportunity to reflect and reclaim ourselves, the original purpose of the Spire of Order.

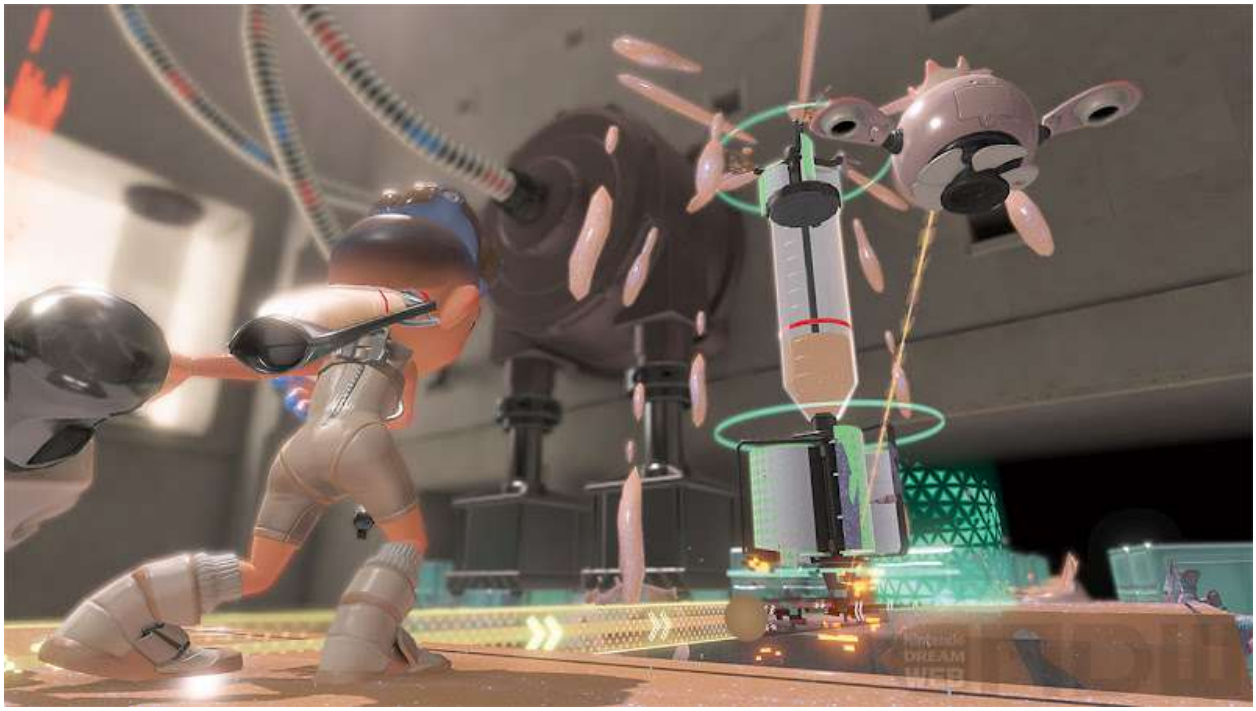
—— How did you decide on the five floor objectives being portals, turbine towers, splat zones, fleeing foes, and ∞-balls?

Matsumoto: Side Order was mainly about “How do you stand against the terrain?” So, we set multiple rules for each floor, allowing for a variety of play styles. From the beginning, we decided to include portals and zones. Each of these has a rule to either attack or protect a certain point.

Portal

Zones

Next, the rule for turbine towers, which is to follow lines on the stage, and the rule for the fleeing foes, which is to follow the escape routes of the stage, were created. Finally, the rules for the ball, which look at the connections between the stage and its inclines, were created. If any of these already have elements similar to Anarchy Matches or previous projects, we tried to keep them as faithful as possible.



Turbine Tower

Fleeing Foes

∞-balls

The turbine tower wouldn’t have fit into the “Side Order” gameplay if the player's position was fixed, so we changed it so that to move the tower forward, you shoot it with ink.

The reason the Spire of Order is 30 Floors Tall

—— How many floors are there in total?

Matsumoto: I counted and found that there are around 100 floors.

—— What was the criteria for determining what difficulty a floor would be?

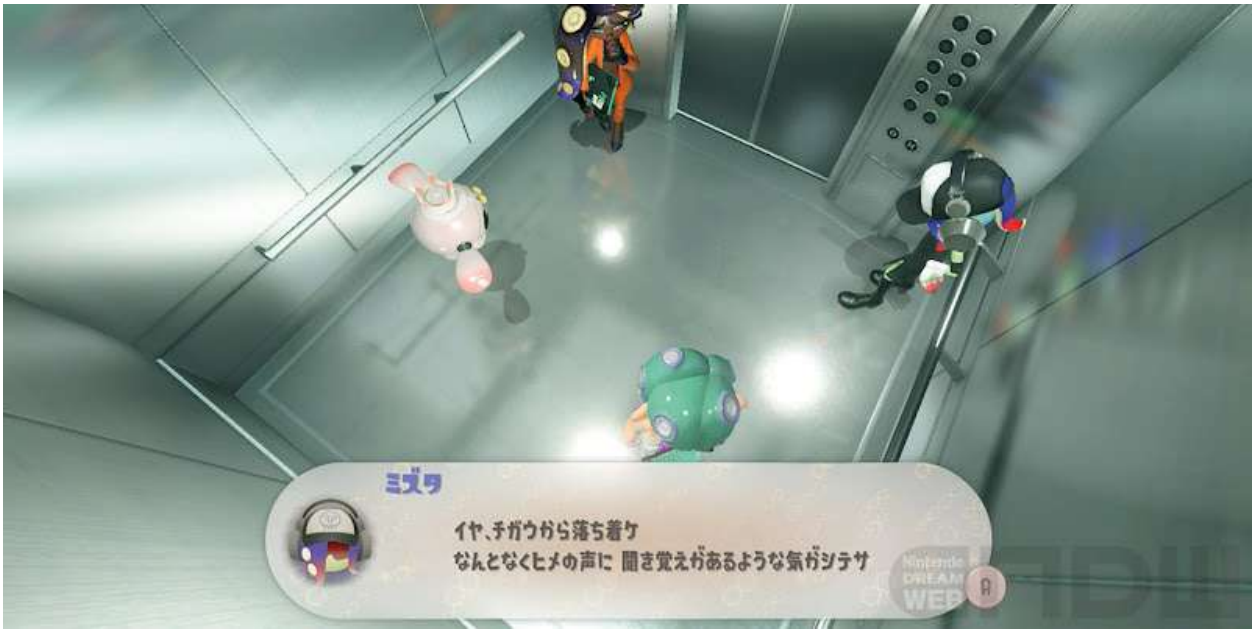
Matsumoto: The difficulty level was determined by the stage's respective creators. However, because of the wide variety of player enhancements, we tried to design them based on a situation in which the player has taken a wide variety of chips at each level and decided on the difficulty level at that state. Separately from the difficulty level, some floors were designed to include elements like "if you have this enhancement, you will have an advantage in this situation."

—— Why was the top floor of the Tower of Order decided to be "30F"?

Matsumoto: Because we had decided to fight the middle boss twice in one challenge, we decided on 30F as it's easy to understand why you'd fight a boss every 10F. However, we wanted to make each climb last about an hour, or even 30 minutes if you get used to the game, so we made adjustments in the composition of the stages and the frequency of the vending machine corners.

—— How many different conversations are there between Agent 8 and the others in the elevator?

Inoue: There are conversations that occur only once or at certain times, but we have prepared about 100 patterns, including more detailed ones; however, you can rest assured that the story will not change depending on whether or not you have seen a particular conversation. There may be conversations where you can learn details about each character's personalities and backgrounds that might make you view them differently, so we hope you will enjoy these changes when you repeatedly challenge the Spire of Order.

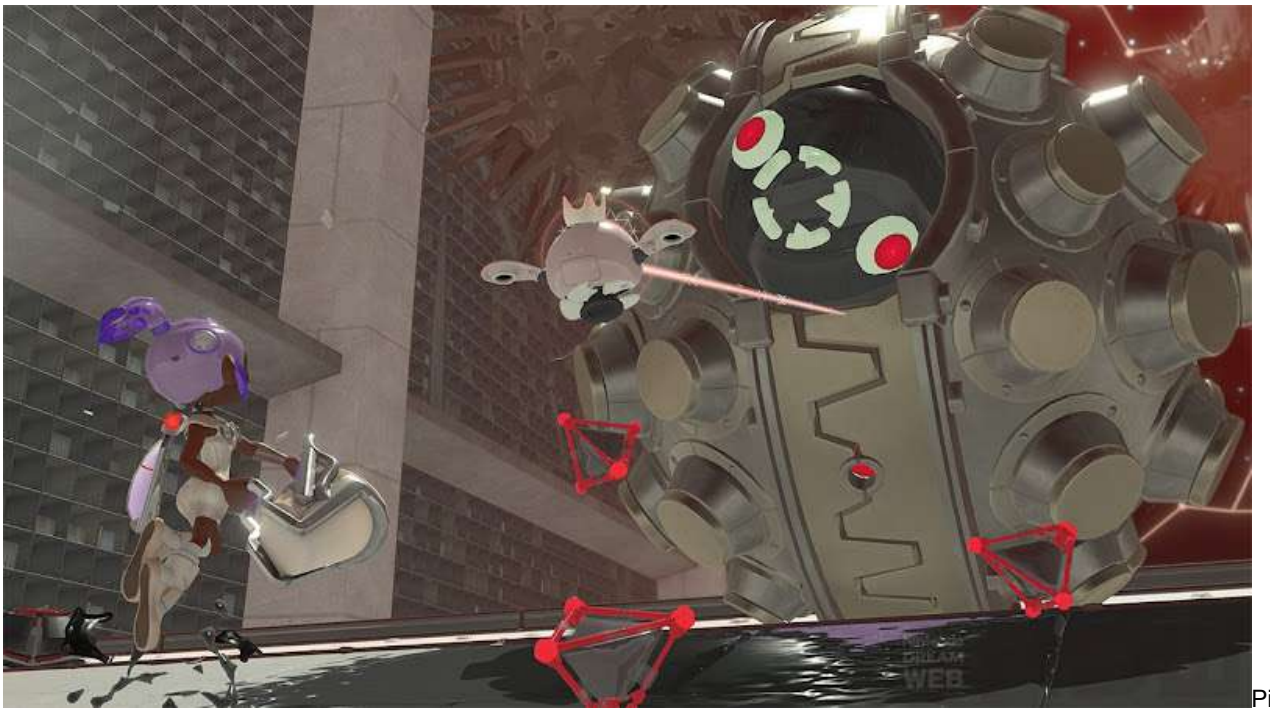


—— What kind of play elements or concepts did you have in mind for each of the three bosses?

Matsumoto: Since the player's abilities change every time they climb the spire, we needed to have a variety of bosses and patterns that would make players want to try out different types of strategies. Specifically, we decided on the following tentative concepts and proceeded with development: **"Central Boss,"** which players fight a boss in the center of the stage; **"Excursion Boss,"** which players fight by chasing after the boss; and **"Mirror Boss,"** which is enhanced in response to player enhancements.

They are strengthened on 20F when compared to 10F, and they are intentionally more varied in both their attack methods and the ways you can defeat them when compared to the bosses in Story Mode.

Asynchronous Rondo



Pinning Marciale

Parallel Canon

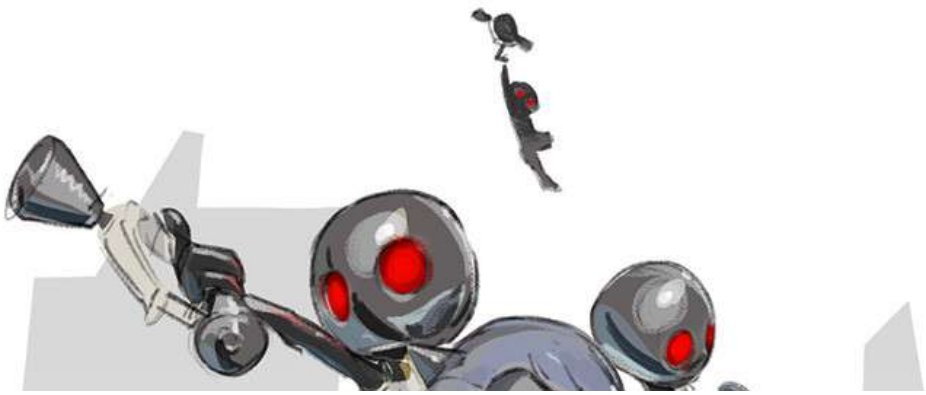
Asynchronous Rondo development sketch

—— Each Parallel Canon has its own unique pose, but do they have any kind of individuality or ego?

Inoue: I believe they have some sort of individuality and ego. There are two types of Parallel Canon: the masked type, which is a copy of Agent. 4, the protagonist of Splatoon 2's Story Mode, and the helmet type, which is a copy of that copy.

Just as the repeated copying of a printed material can change it from the original, each of these may have been copied repeatedly, resulting in the creation of their own individuality. The form of Parallel Canon changes so as to have the same color chip enhancements based on the state of Eight's palette.

Also, if the player has played Splatoon 2, the data will be referred to, and the hair style and gender of Agent 4 will be copied. Parallel Canon is the Agent 4 known to the user, copied and pasted by Order. Upon closer inspection, they appear to be made out of sludge.



Parallel Canon development sketch

—— Is there a possibility that the game system will be expanded upon in the future or become a fundamental part of series gameplay?

Matsumoto: We don't know yet what the future holds, but we believe that we have expanded the game of Splatoon with Side Order. Some customers seem to be playing Turf War and Salmon Run again because of Side Order, and I feel as if “Splatoon” as a whole is becoming more exciting. We hope to expand the possibilities of Splatoon by continuing these kinds of efforts.